

A HEROIC TIER ADVENTURE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®



BLOODSAND ARENA



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST LEVEL

Chris Tulach

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Athas, a land of harsh survival and savage adventure. *Bloodsand Arena* could be your first foray into the DARK SUN® world, or you might be returning after a long hiatus. First published in 1991, the long-awaited resurrection of this beloved 2nd Edition campaign setting is slated for August!

This adventure folio previews 4th Edition DARK SUN material, contains two mini-adventures suitable for 1st-level characters, and comes with a pack of pregenerated characters. After whetting your appetite for DARK SUN today, you can revisit Athas at your local game store during summer 2010 D&D Encounters™ (now playing) and DARK SUN Game Day on August 21. In addition, D&D Insider™ offers preview content and monthly support for Athas. Check out www.dungeonsanddragons.com for more information.

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EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF ATHAS

The world of the DARK SUN campaign setting is unique in several ways. Many familiar trappings of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game are missing or turned on their heads. Athas is not a place of shining knights and robed wizards, of deep forests and divine pantheons. To venture over the sands of Athas is to enter a world of savagery and splendor that draws on different traditions of fantasy and storytelling. Simple survival beneath the ancient red sun is often its own adventure.

Newcomers to Athas have many things to learn about the world, its people, and its monsters, but the following eight characteristics encapsulate the most important features of the DARK SUN campaign setting.

1. THE WORLD IS A DESERT

Athas is a hot, arid planet covered with seemingly endless seas of dunes, lifeless salt flats, stony wastes, rocky badlands, and thorny scrublands. From the first moments of dawn, the crimson sun beats down from an olive-tinged sky. Temperatures routinely exceed 100 degrees by midmorning and can reach 130 degrees by late afternoon. The wind is like the blast of a furnace, offering no relief from the oppressive heat. Dust and sand borne on the breeze coat everything with yellow-orange silt.

In this forbidding world, cities and villages exist only in a few oases or verdant plains. Some places don't see rain for years at a time, and even in fertile regions, precipitation is little more than a humid mist that falls for a few weeks before giving way to long months of heat and drought. The world beyond these islands of civilization is a barren wasteland where nomads, raiders, and hungry monsters roam.

Athas was not always a desert, and the crumbling ruins of a planet once rich with rivers and seas dot the parched landscape. Ancient bridges spanning dry watercourses and empty stone quays facing seas of sand tell the tale of a world that is no more.

2. THE WORLD IS SAVAGE

Life on Athas is brutal and short. Bloodthirsty raiders, greedy slavers, and hordes of merciless savages overrun the deserts and wastelands. The cities are not much safer; each chokes in the grip of an immortal tyrant. Slavery is widespread on Athas, and many unfortunates spend their lives in chains, toiling for brutal taskmasters. Every year, hundreds of slaves, perhaps thousands, are sent to their deaths in bloody arena spectacles. Charity, compassion, kindness—these qualities exist, but they are rare and precious blooms. Only a fool hopes for such riches.

3. METAL IS SCARCE

Most weapons and armor are made of bone, stone, wood, and similar materials. Mail or plate armor exists only in the treasuries of the sorcerer-kings. Steel blades are nearly priceless; many heroes never see such weapons during their lifetimes.

4. ARCANES MAGIC DEFILES THE WORLD

Reckless use of arcane magic during ancient wars reduced Athas to a wasteland. To cast an arcane spell, a magic user siphons power from the living world. Nearby plants wither to ash, crippling pain wracks animals and people, and the soil is permanently sterilized. It is possible to cast spells with care, avoiding any more damage to the world, but defiling is easier and faster than preserving. As a result, sorcerers, wizards, and other wielders of arcane magic are reviled and persecuted across Athas regardless of whether they preserve or defile. Only the most powerful spellcasters can use their arcane abilities without fear of reprisals.

5. SORCERER-KINGS RULE THE CITY-STATES

Terrible defilers of immense power rule all but one of the city-states. These mighty spellcasters have held their thrones for centuries; no one alive remembers a time before the sorcerer-kings. Some claim to be gods, and some profess to serve gods. Some are brutal oppressors, while others are subtle in their tyranny. The sorcerer-kings govern through priesthoods or bureaucracies of greedy, ambitious templars. Only in the city-state of Tyr does a glimmer of freedom beckon, and powerful forces already conspire to extinguish it.

6. THE GODS ARE SILENT

Long ago, when the planet was green, the brutal might of the primordials overcame the gods. Today, Athas is a world without deities. No clerics, no paladins, and no prophets live on Athas. And religious orders are dedicated to sorcerer-kings who claim godhood. Old shrines and crumbling temples lie amid ancient ruins, testimony to a time when the gods spoke to the people of Athas. Nothing but the sighing of the desert wind is heard now.

In the absence of divine guidance, other powers have come to prominence in the world. Psionic power is well known and widely practiced on Athas; even unintelligent desert monsters can have deadly psionic abilities. Meanwhile, shamans and druids call on the world's primal powers, which are often sculpted by the influence of elemental power.

7. FIERCE MONSTERS ROAM THE WORLD

The desert planet has its own deadly ecology. Many creatures that are familiar sights on milder worlds have long since died out or never existed on Athas. The world has no cattle, swine, or horses; instead, people tend flocks of erdlus, ride on kanks or crodlus, and draw wagons with inixes and mekillots. Wild creatures such as lions, bears, and wolves are almost nonexistent. In their place are terrors such as the id fiend, the baazrag, and the tembo. Perhaps the harsh environment of Athas breeds creatures tough and vicious enough to survive it, or maybe the touch of ancient sorcery poisoned the wellsprings of life and inflicted monster after monster on the dying world. Either way, the deserts are perilous, and only a fool or a lunatic travels them alone.

8. FAMILIAR RACES AREN'T WHAT YOU EXPECT

Typical fantasy stereotypes don't apply to Athasian heroes. In many DUNGEONS & DRAGONS settings, elves are wise, benevolent forest-dwellers who guard their homelands from intrusions of evil. On Athas, elves are nomadic herders, raiders, peddlers, and thieves. Halflings aren't amiable river-folk; they're xenophobic headhunters and cannibals who hunt and kill trespassers in their mountain forests. Goliaths—or half-giants, as they are commonly known—are brutal mercenaries who serve as elite guards and enforcers for the sorcerer-kings and their templars.

TYR REGION

The remains of Athasian civilization tenuously cling to life in the Tyr Region, an area that takes its name from the oldest city-state. The Tyr Region boasts dozens of towns and villages, but most Athasians live in one of the seven great city-states. Ancient and despotic sorcerer-kings rule the Seven Cities, defining life for city-state residents as well as the smaller societies that dwell in the expanses between the urban centers. The Ringing Mountains, a massive chain of peaks, and the vast Sea of Silt border the Tyr Region. Beyond them stretch wastelands devoid of settlements and culture.

The following paragraphs briefly describe the city-states and other major Tyr Region features.

Tyr: The massive Ziggurat of Kalak and the imposing Golden Tower dominate the skyline of Tyr, the oldest Athasian city-state. Its streets writhe with intrigue, hope, and fear as its residents react to the overthrow and subsequent slaying of Sorcerer-King Kalak. After centuries of tyranny, the call for freedom has enchanted a significant portion of the population. While influential factions snatch at power, a steady stream of adventurers seeking fortune and a free life flows into Tyr. King Tithian, the high templar who betrayed Kalak, holds power for now, but no one can say whether that will last a few hours, a few days, or a few centuries.

Balic: Perched on the shores of the Forked Tongue Estuary, Balic is wealthy and touts a rich cultural heritage. Its mercantile prowess brings prosperity, and its Chamber of Patricians upholds the city-state's democratic pretense. In truth, however, the chamber's senators answer to Sorcerer-King Andropinis, a dictator they dare not defy.

Draj: Farthest from the hub of civilization, Draj is an isolated city-state embroiled in endless warfare. Mad Sorcerer-King Tectuktitlay rules the City of Moons through fear and bloodletting. Tectuktitlay's templars, the moon priests, act as bureaucrats and religious enforcers, using propaganda and brutality to cow the populace. Mass executions and sacrifices are commonplace, and the channels cut into the towering Father and Master Temple run with Draji and enemy blood alike.

Gulg: Within the verdant confines of the Crescent Forest, the smallest of the city-states exists as a collective of villages that draws sustenance from the bounty of the lush land. Gulgans have no doubt the Oba, as they call Sorcerer-Queen Lalali-Puy, is a goddess, and most willingly serve her. Lalali-Puy teaches that she and her templars stand as the city-state's only defense against the primal spirits that burn to destroy Gulg and its people. In truth, Lalali-Puy's shamans and druids use primal magic to enslave the volatile spirits.

Nibenay: Residents believe Nibenay, the City of Spires, is the last bastion of true civilization on Athas. That vaunted worldview is reflected in every aspect of Nibenese culture, ranging from the city-state's opulent architecture to its resplendent dance forms. The reclusive Shadow King, who shares his name with the city-state, has spent centuries tucked away in his arcane studies. However, with the news of Sorcerer-King Kalak's death, Nibenay has begun to take a more active interest in the city-state's governance and the activities of his numerous templar-wives.

Raam: The populous city-state of Raam, once ripe and magnificent, is crumbling. The hedonistic Sorcerer-Queen Abalach-Re ignores the starving rioters and violent warlord-sword factions as she indulges in every pleasure. Citizens squabble over scraps of food, and fatalism wars with desperation on every filthy, decrepit street of Raam.

Urik: Hamanu, a rigid and brilliant strategist, rules this powerful, militarized city-state. The self-styled King of the World long ago erected fortress walls around Urik, and the authoritarian nature of his rule demands peace and order be kept within the city-state's gates. Urik's laborers and crafters are industrious, keeping the seemingly invincible Hamanu's war machine supplied and providing a massive output of trade goods.

Forest Ridge: A sweeping expanse of lush jungle wilderness beneath the Ringing Mountains, Forest Ridge is a primeval land filled with bounty, danger, and ruins. Fierce, cannibalistic halfling tribes claim Forest Ridge as their homeland. Few travelers journey to the outer edges, let alone the interior, of this teeming land. Most Athasians don't believe it exists.

Ivory Triangle: Major trade routes cross this wasteland in the center of the Tyr Region, and only a handful of villages and city-state outposts are scattered across the empty land. Both factors make the Ivory Triangle prime hunting territory for raiders and monsters. Its landscape includes the Great Ivory Plain, a salt flat that spans hundreds of miles; the Crescent Forest; the low-lying Mekillot Mountains; and the Beastbarrens, a cursed land that warps the bodies of desert predators.

Ringing Mountains: At the western edge of the Tyr Region, the Ringing Mountains are the largest range known to Athasians. The highest peaks top 20,000 feet, and the lowest passes stretch about 12,000 feet above the lowlands. Tribes of goliaths, halflings, and other folk eke out an existence in the thin air. These herders, miners, and nomads live their lives out of reach of the sorcerer-kings. The high vales are also home to a smattering of monasteries.

Sea of Silt: A great dust sink that extends into the unknown reaches of the world, Athasians consider the Sea of Silt impassible. Silt skimmers and waders can skirt the shoreline where the dust is shallow, but traveling deeper runs the risk of monsters, drowning, and Gray Death—suffocating in airborne dust. Thus, this eastern edge of the Tyr Region lies almost completely unexplored.

Tablelands: An expanse of scrub plains, desert, and rocky badlands forms the western cradle of civilization in the Tyr Region. Tyr and Urik claim dominance over the Tablelands, and most settled Athasians who dwell outside the city-states live in this area. The fortified town of Altaruk, abutting the Balic-Tyr trade route, is an important Tablelands settlement. Oases, such as Grak's Pool and Silver Spring, and a few well-used caravan routes make this Tyr Region wilderness more hospitable than other areas.

PEOPLE OF ATHAS

Athas's savage environment and its populace make it unique among the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS worlds. Each city-state's social order starts with the sorcerer-king at its pinnacle. Templars and nobles make up the upper caste. Merchants and other free citizens form the middle ranks, and the ubiquitous slave laborers act as the city-state's foundation.

Humans dominate the racial composition of most city-states. Indeed, all the sorcerer-kings are (or once were) human. Elves ply the dunes and marketplaces; many are known as shifty traders or opportunistic raiders. Dwarves labor, often as builders or farmers, with resolute determination. Many goliaths, also known as half-giants, work as bodyguards or mercenaries for the wealthy and powerful.

Nomadic tiefling bands roam the wastes and outskirts of civilization, raiding and slaughtering at will. Dragonborn, or dray, are often mercenaries, sorcerers, or slave traders. They live in tight-knit clans and shelter in secret citadels. Halflings feel most at home in the Forest Ridge, their ancestral land, and other Athasians fear their "savage ways." The secretive eladrin live in the few wild places the Lands within the Wind (the Feywild) still touches. Eladrin are rare in the mortal world.

In addition to the more familiar D&D races, Athas is also home to muls and thri-kreen. Taller than most humans, muls are a race of half-dwarves. Strong, tough, and quick, muls often serve as slaves, gladiators, and laborers. The nimble, mantislike thri-kreen can survive on little. Their packs hunt in the wastes and view everything through the predator-prey relationship.

ADVENTURERS OF ATHAS

Heroes of Athas are fired from a different kiln and have little in common with adventurers from other DUNGEONS & DRAGONS worlds. Every day is a fight for survival and opportunity in an unforgiving land. In addition, Athasian history has severed access to a swath of religious and magical paths.

Martial adventurers, such as fighters, rangers, rogues, and warlords, are common in settlements and outlands. Anyone who can wield a weapon and has a bit of ambition can find work as a guard, hunter, gladiator, or agent.

In the wastes and wilderness, primal magic is powerful, revered, and on occasion feared. City-state dwellers, however, rarely understand primal power and are suspicious of people who wield it. Meanwhile, most travelers are nonplussed when they encounter a barbarian, druid, shaman, seeker, or warden, especially when venturing far from settled areas.

Arcane magic is dangerous. Its misuse is what despoiled the world and continues to defile the land when the user doesn't wield the power with care (an art called "preserving"). The sorcerer-kings are the mightiest arcanists and punish any unsanctioned use of arcane magic. Bards, sorcerers, wizards, and warlocks are hated and persecuted for wielding arcane power, even when they walk the path of a preserver.

Psionic talent is common, and many people practice the Way. Nobles, merchants, and warlords employ psionic adventurers to engage in tasks both overt and covert. Ardents, battleminds, monks, and psions are found across the Tyr Region.

Whereas psionic power is widespread on Athas, divine magic is essentially extinct. The gods have been silent for centuries, and their faiths have crumbled along with their temples of old. Instead of true deities, Athasians worship sorcerer-kings, cults of demons or primordials, or primal spirits.

KEEP PLAYING IN ATHAS

If your group has played the two mini-adventures presented in this folio and wants more action in Athas, your players can continue using the provided characters, leveling them up when appropriate. Plenty of existing powers and feats are suitable substitutes for the material in the *DARK SUN Campaign Setting*TM. Once your players pick up the *DARK SUN* books in August, you can allow them to create new characters or let them retrain any substitutes taken for their existing characters.

To take up arms in more Athas adventures, head to your local game store on Wednesdays to take part in the summer 2010 season of D&D Encounters. This program features a *DARK SUN* mini-campaign called *Fury of the Wastewalker*TM, broken into weekly one-encounter sessions.

ADVENTURE THEMES

Bloodsand Arena provides two mini-adventures that touch on common *DARK SUN* themes. If you want to further explore Athas, you can use the following themes as a starting point for crafting your own adventures.

Slavery and Freedom: The Seven Cities adhere to hierarchies that grant rights, impose rules, and divvy responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, the heaviest burdens fall to the lowest class. Thus, slaves shoulder the simultaneously mundane and vital tasks that enable the city-states to function. Characters might begin their heroic careers as slaves in any number of roles—laborers, guards, gladiators, or servants—and find freedom through happenstance, negotiation, battle, or subterfuge. Alternatively, opportunistic slavers would think nothing of capturing free people and selling them into servitude. Adventurers would likely be lucrative to such malign individuals.

Survival and Danger: Athas's wastelands are harsh and unforgiving. Travel from one settlement to another, even along a well-used road, is still a gamble. Unscrupulous raiders, vicious monsters, savage tribes, and the oppressive environment can mean a quick death for weak or foolhardy people. Running out of food or water rations, getting lost in feature-starved flats, and crossing hazardous terrain are pressing dangers, particularly when travelers venture off the trade routes.

Intrigue and Authority: Even though the city-states offer protection from the wilds, life within their walls can be just as savage. Athasians are survivors by nature, and they take advantage of opportunities to get ahead, even if it means stepping on the backs of others. The sorcerer-kings, nobles, and powerful merchants wield varying levels of influence, and characters could easily become embroiled in faction conflicts. Many power groups operate on the sly. The Veiled Alliance, for example, discreetly employs sympathetic outsiders to aid particular schemes, provide distractions, or act as cover for its various operations.

Discovery and Desolation: Athas's wastelands entomb secret locales, including ruins from the forgotten ages before the world was dying, ancient bunkers in which the sorcerer-kings have locked away powerful knowledge, magically concealed sites that inexplicably gather power, and lairs of terrible primordial and elemental beings bent on sowing despair and destruction. Characters might be compelled to unravel a mystery or seek out a particularly lucrative relic or secret.

LOOKING FOR ATHASIAN MONSTERS?

The *DARK SUN Creature Catalog*TM contains a multitude of unique creatures that call Athas home. But if you're looking to run more DARK SUN adventures before the book's August release, these existing low-level (levels 1-5) D&D monsters could fit the bill.

Monster Manual[®]: Beetles, rats, kruthiks, skeletons, zombies, lizardfolk (called ssurrans), hyenas, bats, spiders, magma beasts, oozes, drakes, ghouls, and slaad tadpoles.

Monster Manual 2: Ankhegs, elementals, demons, centipedes, lizardfolk, ants, oozes, drakes, and skeletons.

Monster Manual 3: Elementals, demons, spiders, rot grubs, and dread warriors.

In general, reptilian and insectlike creatures sport an "Athasian feel." Of course, you're not limited to these monsters; use whatever you think works.

ARENA COMBAT

This adventure folio includes a double-sided poster map depicting three encounter areas: an Athasian marketplace, a gladiator training chamber, and a gladiatorial arena. The arena map's minimalist approach to features is designed to offer DMs a blank canvas on which to plot myriad gladiatorial contests.

All the city-states have arenas, as do several smaller communities. The pervasiveness and innate versatility of gladiatorial games offer DMs endless opportunity. You can craft an exciting one-off encounter for your players or use an arena contest as the foundation for a new campaign. Throwing your group into an arena teeming with monsters might be fun, but arena combat can provide other exciting challenges as well. The following ideas can add spice to your arena engagements.

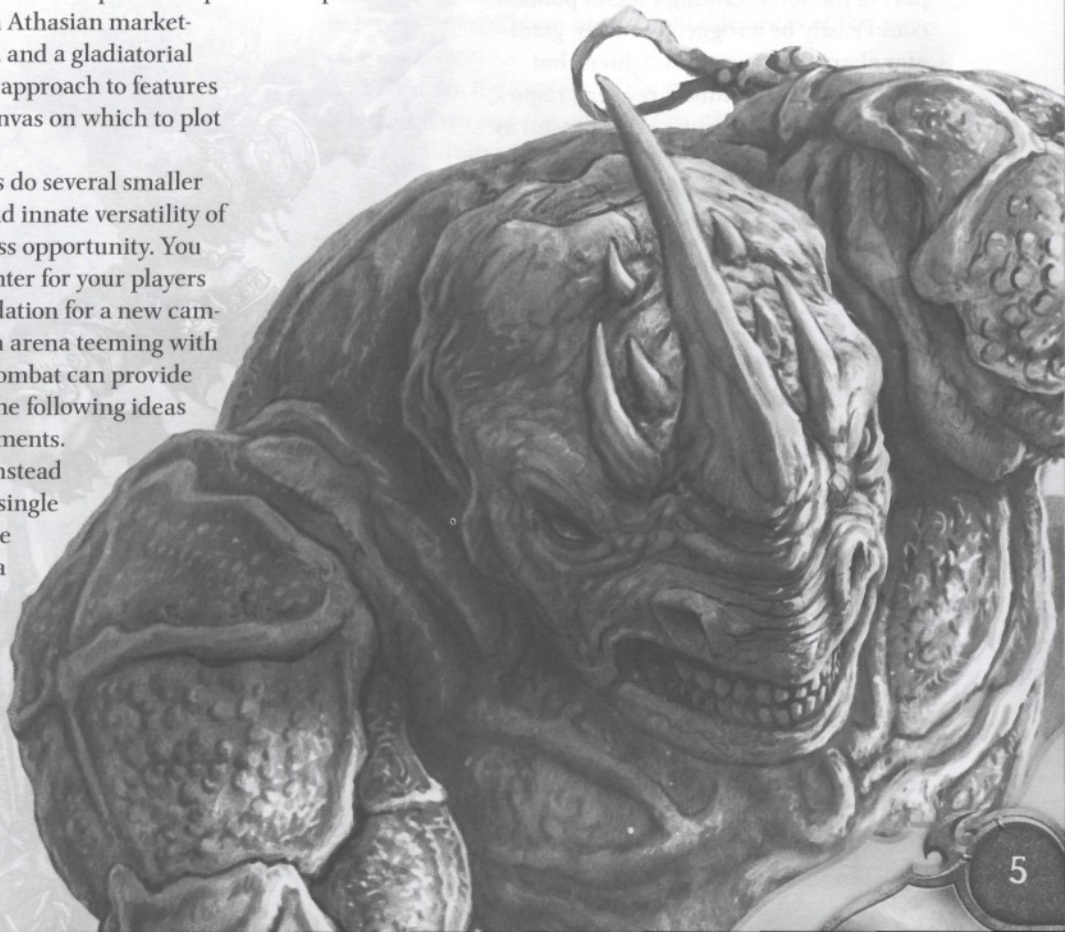
Small Simultaneous Fights: Instead of having all your players fight as a single unit, split the party into two or three groups. You can divide up the arena space and have each party team fight a smaller group of foes. You can even run the combats on the same initiative, providing the feel of a cut scene as you move the action back and forth between the arena battles.

Arena Hazards and Terrain: Introduce hindering, blocking, and fantastic terrain in different spots on the arena floor. Have traps or hazards that move around the battlefield on their turn or require creative tactical decisions to avoid. This approach breaks lines of sight, thus encouraging maneuvering and interaction with the arena environment. Place beneficial pieces of terrain, such as blood rock (see *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 67), in key areas where you want the party and its foes to jockey for position.

Crowd Goes Wild: Each arena crowd favors a particular bloodsport. Some appreciate brutal wrestling, for example, while others prefer nimble skirmishes. You can award a small bonus (+1 to the next attack roll or +1 to all defenses until the start of the next turn) to encourage certain combat maneuvers, feat use, or power use. When a player character uses a crowd-favored tactic, the crowd whoops its approval.

Game Within the Game: An arena fight can be more than a fight to the death. Create games that involve item retrieval and possession, king-of-the-hill, maze navigation, or "tagging" (scoring a hit) every enemy on the opposing team. Develop multiple win conditions or have a succession of simple games so a variety of players have an opportunity to shine.

Something Completely Different: To really mix it up, position your arena combat in a shocking location: a silt pond with ships, the back of an enormous beast, the edges of a magma pit, or an enchanted vestige of the Feywild. On the flipside, bring the fantastic terrain to the arena; after all, the sorcerer-kings are incredibly powerful arcane wielders.



RULES OPTIONS FOR DARK SUN GAMES

The *DARK SUN Campaign Setting* introduces several rules options that can infuse a decidedly Athasian flavor into your game. The following selections are a sampling of options you can tap when trekking your players across the dying world.

CHARACTER THEMES

The *DARK SUN Campaign Setting* includes a new option for character building, and all six pregenerated characters presented with *Bloodsand Arena* have it: a character theme. A theme is a career, calling, or archetype that might include characters of several different classes and roles. Just as race and class help to identify who a character is in the world, a theme adds a third character component to help refine a player character's story and identity. A character might be an elf rogue, but is she an elf rogue dune trader, an elf rogue nomad, or an elf rogue who spies for the Veiled Alliance? Each theme offers a different story for the same basic character concept. If a background describes how or where a character grew up, theme describes how and why he became a hero.

A theme embraces characters of almost any class. For example, many templar characters are warlocks; however, a templar who serves chiefly as a commander of the sorcerer-king's troops might be better described by the warlord class, whereas a templar who is part of the sorcerer-king's secret police could easily be a rogue. Similarly, gladiator characters are often fighters; but barbarians, battleminds, rangers, rogues, and warlords can be just as successful as fighters in the arena. "Templar" and "gladiator" are therefore themes that extend beyond the warlock and fighter classes, even though they're particularly appropriate for warlocks and fighters, respectively.

WEAPONS OF INFERIOR MATERIALS

Nonmetal weapons break more easily than metal ones. A broken item is at best an improvised weapon. Damaged magic weapons lose their enhancement, properties, and powers until repaired. The following option simulates the relative fragility of nonmetal weapons, making combat more unpredictable and exciting.

Reckless Breakage: When a player rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, his character's weapon has a chance to break. He can accept the result, automatically missing the attack as usual, and keep his weapon intact. Alternatively, the player can reroll. Regardless of the reroll result, a nonmetal weapon breaks once the attack is

complete. A metal weapon, however, breaks only if the player rolls a natural 5 or lower on the reroll. This rule gives him a say in whether his weapon breaks. He can play it safe and accept the errant attack, or he can risk his weapon to try to avoid a miss.

DEFILING MAGIC

Defiling magic is an easy path to power for an arcane caster. Indeed, its use is responsible for the world's ruinous state. When a character using an arcane power chooses to defile, she can use *arcane defiling* to alter the outcome of her most powerful spells (daily powers).

Two of the pregenerated characters are arcanists. Suldin is a member of the Veiled Alliance and a preserver, someone who casts his arcane spells in harmony with nature and would never walk the path of a defiler. Vinara the warlock, a templar-wife to Sorcerer-King Nibenay, is an opportunist and might try to defile if she deems it necessary.

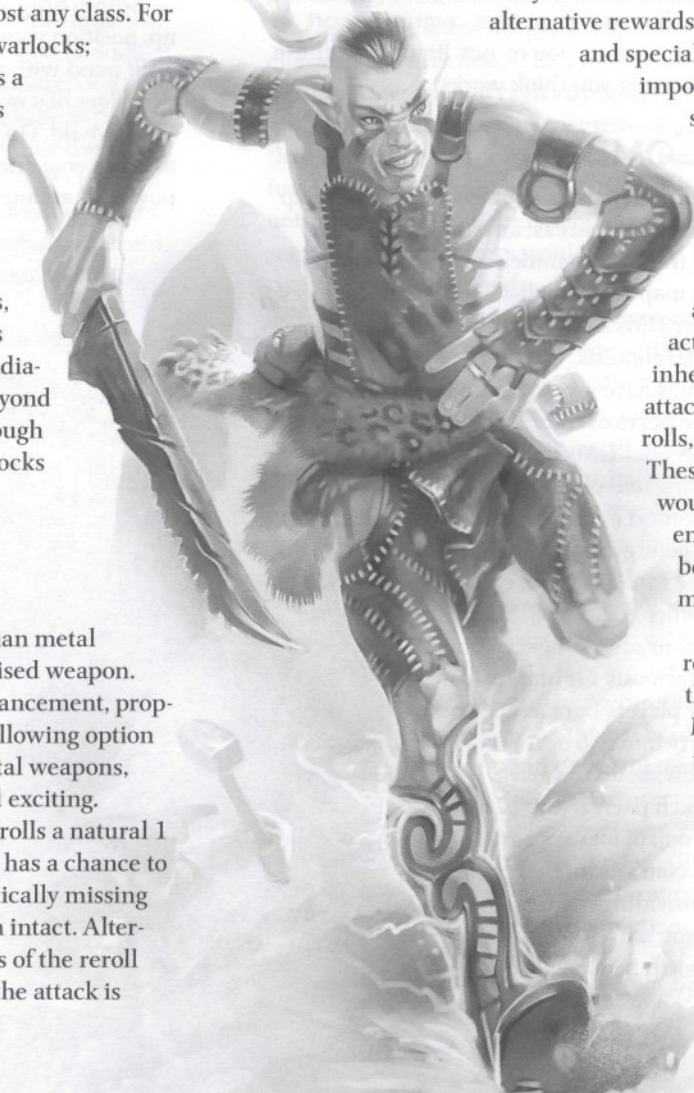
ALTERNATIVE REWARDS

Characters in *DARK SUN* don't earn as many magic items as characters in other D&D worlds. Such items are scarce on Athas and often end up being destroyed out of fear or locked away in sorcerer-king coffers. Thus,

alternative rewards, such as favors and special training, are important in Athasian campaigns.

You can also adopt fixed enhancement bonuses, allowing characters to gain inherent bonuses to attack rolls, damage rolls, and defenses. These flat bonuses wouldn't stack with enhancement bonuses from magic items.

You can read more about these options in *Dungeon Master's Guide® 2* and the *DARK SUN Campaign Setting*.



INTRODUCTION

This is the first of two mini-adventures.

A wily elf trader who is moving cargo from Tyr to Altaruk hires the player characters to guard his caravan. Once they arrive in town, the trader's tribe attempts to capture the characters to later sell into slavery. Altaruk's enforcers intervene, and the matter is likely brought to Bloodsand Arena for resolution.

ALTARUK

The town of Altaruk sits atop an important juncture along the Balic-Tyr trade route. Other routes branching from Altaruk extend toward the northern city-states and into the eastern Tablelands. Altaruk lies near the head of the Estuary of the Forked Tongue, a silt channel dotted with small islands that pours into the great Sea of Silt.

Powerful Balican merchant houses sponsor the heavily fortified town. A 15-foot wall encircles Altaruk, and a well-trained mercenary army drives off raiders. The army's frequent patrols flush out bandits and predatory creatures within a half-day's ride. Only a sizable offensive might crack the mercenaries' defenses. Lately, the army's commanders have been casting a wary eye toward the Estuary as rumors swirl that the giants are planning to again move against the town.

Arisphistaneles, a Balican noble, governs the town. He is well known as a pragmatic man who holds citizens and traders equally accountable to Altaruk's laws. Arisphistaneles also has a secret. He heads the town's Veiled Alliance cell and can be counted on to provide shelter, information, and supplies to Alliance members who can prove their dedication to the cabal.

Given the town's covert status as a haven to preservers and its fair rulership, Altaruk could make a good base of operations for an adventuring group interested in righteous action. Its way-station drama, regular bandit-clearing excursions, and plague of giants keep Altaruk flush with adventure possibilities.

BACKGROUND

Kaldras, an elf trader and opportunistic slaver, and his family entered the volatile city-state of Tyr on business. After delivering the last of their cargo, Kaldras invested his tribe's profits in an iron goods deal. Late in the evening, he discovered he'd been hoodwinked; four-fifths of their new cargo was actually made from shoddy ceramic. Due to leave with the dawn, Kaldras simmered over the humiliation that awaited him in Altaruk where he was scheduled to rendezvous with the rest of his tribe. Chagrined, Kaldras decided to fall back on a sure-fire plan: hire capable-looking people to work as guards and beast handlers; then have the tribe jump the hired hands and later sell them into slavery.

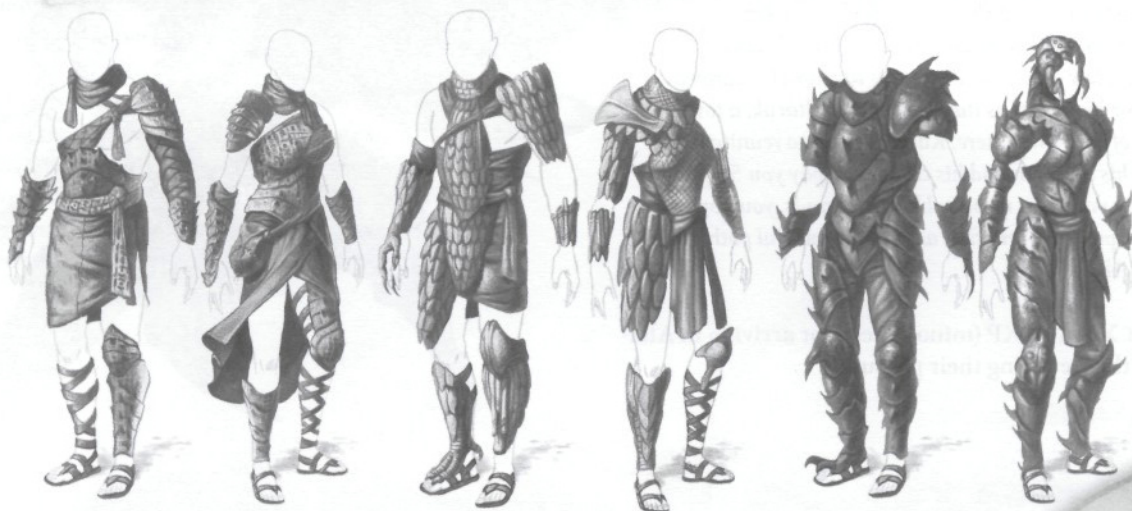
The player characters were perfect marks: outcasts, itinerants, and travelers who had no reason to stay in Tyr and were searching for work. So the smarting elf hired them, and the caravan began its journey to Altaruk.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The player characters begin their adventure on the road leading away from Tyr, a city-state in chaos following the death of Sorcerer-King Kalak. Working as hired hands, they must contend with the unforgiving desert elements while protecting the elves and their cargo from attack.

Once in Altaruk, Kaldras's caravan heads to the small Elven Market on the outskirts of the merchant quarter, which is conveniently positioned near the town gates. As the player characters begin tending the beasts, the tribe ambushes them. The resulting ruckus alerts the town guard, which stamps out the brawl before it can spill into more reputable areas of the merchant quarter.

Tellemon, the captain of the guard, demands to know why the elves and the adventurers are disturbing the peace. Kaldras assures Tellemon that the player characters are slaves who escaped from a noble Balican family, and his tribe was hired to bring them back. The captain of the guard listens to both sides of the story before arresting all the combatants and declaring that the dispute can only be resolved in the arena.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

In the days following the rebellion that unseated and slew Sorcerer-King Kalak, three outlaws have been taking advantage of the chaos to make some financial inroads in their lives as they hide from their pursuers. However, **Kindrok**, **Suldin**, and **Vinara** have inadvertently crossed a couple of well-connected thieves, and news of the outlaws' whereabouts has since been trumpeted across the city-state. The three need to hightail it out of Tyr while cloaked in respectability. When an elf trader offers them work and ceramic coins (Athas's currency), the outlaws immediately accept. The politically stable town of Altaruk could be just the place to shake out the fleas and begin anew.

Meanwhile, three wasteland outcasts, **Morg**, **Pak'cha**, and **Ulieth**, are heading to Tyr to earn some ceramic with which to buy supplies and water for their small gang of survivors hiding out in the foothills north of the city-state.

Each group has its own hook below. If you are using your own characters, you can modify the hooks to suit them or create new ones.

HOOK: TYRIAN OUTLAWS

Read the following to players of **Kindrok**, **Suldin**, and **Vinara**:

Tyr is a city-state in chaos, and paradigms across Athas are snapping. Kalak, one of the nearly omnipotent sorcerer-kings, is dead. A band of rebels, now known as the Deposers of Kalak, laid low the centuries-old tyrant. In the wake of the great arcanists' downfall, the city's oppressive order has crumbled. Factions struggle for power, snatching at scraps of influence and wealth as templars, Kalak's agents, struggle to reassert civic authority. Howls of anarchy mix with the joyous whoops of freed slaves in a cacophony that has yet to quiet since the world turned on its head.

You thought the bedlam Kalak's death created would afford you a measure of protection from your current troubles. So confident were you that you opted to throw the dice in a couple questionable financial opportunities. Apparently those who lost while you gained alerted bounty hunters to your whereabouts. Now desperate for a discreet way to flee the nearly lawless Tyr, you've accepted work with an elf trader name Kaldras. He needed a few able-bodied workers to guard his caravan and care for his beasts as they journey to Altaruk, a town southeast of Tyr. Once there, Kaldras plans to reunite with the rest of his tribe, unload his cargo, and pay you 50 gp in ceramic. By posing as respectable hired hands, you hope to evade your pursuers and find a new, less colorful path when you reach Altaruk.

Quest XP: 100 XP (minor quest) for arriving in Altaruk and, thus, evading their pursuers.

HOOK: WASTELAND OUTCASTS

Read the following to players of **Morg**, **Pak'cha**, and **Ulieth**:

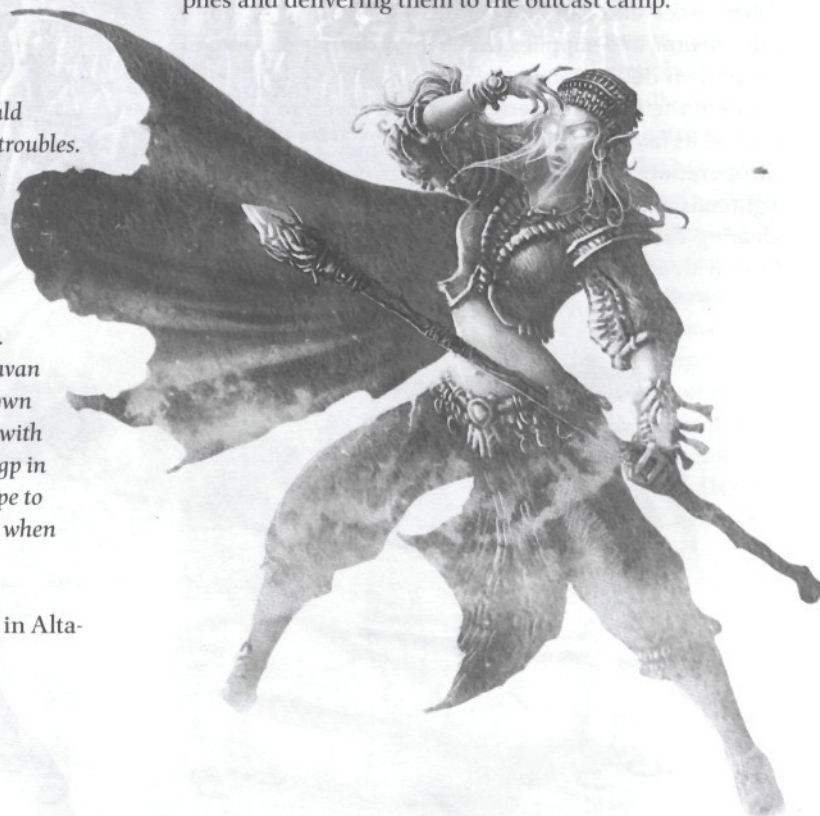
Highsun, the hottest month of the year, is brutal on everyone, including your band of outcast refugees living in the foothills of the Ringing Mountains north of the city-state of Tyr. When your gang moved to its current camp during the cooler months, game was plentiful enough, and the spirits of the land answered your calls with occasional finds of water buried beneath the cracked stones and within cacti near your hideout.

Now, the oppressive heat has taken a toll on your group of escaped slaves, former convicts, and displaced tribal folk. Your band's small stores of water are running dangerously low, and the cacti have long since been desiccated. Your hunters must travel farther to find prey, and they return with less to eat. The camp turns to you, its trusted leader and fighters, to bring back sustenance before more of your outcast kin die in the rocky badland hideaway.

You gather up your meager possessions and set out for Tyr, where you hope to find a way to earn some coin or barter for supplies. Just outside the city-state, you hear rumors that its citizenry is in open rebellion, and its sorcerer-king, Kalak, is dead. Such disorder has surely sparked a mad grab for precious resources, dashing your hope.

As you skirt Tyr's boundaries, you spy an elven caravan heading southeast. You notice the elves have a few workers along and ask the caravan master, Kaldras, if he could use a few more hands. He hires you to guard the caravan and care for his beasts. Once in Altaruk, you can collect your 50 gp in ceramic apiece and either purchase supplies there or head to Grak's Pool, a nearby oasis, to obtain water.

Quest XP: 500 XP (major quest) for obtaining supplies and delivering them to the outcast camp.



ENCOUNTER B1: ROAD TO ALTARUK

Encounter Level 2 (750 XP)

SETUP

The adventurers begin on the road outside Tyr. They are in the employ of elf trader Kaldras, who has charged his hired hands with guarding the caravan and caring for his family's kanks. The two groups of characters—the Tyrian outlaws and the wasteland outcasts—begin work as strangers. The players might want to introduce their characters to one another before you proceed with the encounter.

Once the players are ready to begin the adventure, read:

Withering waves of heat lap at you, borne on a dusty desert breeze. It is Highsun, the hottest and most oppressive time of year. You are walking along a cracked and hard trade road leading away from Tyr.

Wrapped in dun-colored traveling tunics, Kaldras and his elven family of eight take large, measured strides down the path. Two kanks—large, black, insectlike creatures often used as beasts of burden—carry the cargo Kaldras purchased in Tyr. The goods are mostly mundane ceramic wares, and you can't imagine they'll sell for much in Altaruk's market quarter. As you settle into your traveling gait, you notice the elves are competent and careful caravan guides. You feel confident that you and the other hired strangers will be able to easily fulfill your commitment over the next several scorching days.

The elves do not ride the kanks, preferring to move at a quick pace on foot. Hardy, fast, and requiring little sustenance, kanks are ideal mounts for travel in the hottest seasons. If a character asks to ride one, Kaldras allows it, but the set of his brow shouts of his disdain for such a weak person.

GUIDE THE CARAVAN TO ALTARUK

Even though Kaldras's caravan has traveled this trade route many times, safe passage is never guaranteed. Overland travel is perilous any time of year, but Highsun turns a tense situation into a grueling affair.

This skill challenge is divided into three stages. Each stage requires 4 successes before 3 failures.

Kaldras's caravan leaves Tyr well stocked with supplies. However, failure during the second stage of the skill challenge could result in the characters having to dip into their personal stores of survival days (rations and water).

10 Human Slaves

Medium natural humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 13, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 11

Speed 6

TRAITS

Laborer's Resilience

When it drops to 0 hit points, the slave does not fall unconscious until the end of its next turn.

Strength in Numbers

The slave gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls for each ally adjacent to its target.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage. The slave deals 1 extra damage for each ally adjacent to the target of its attack.

Str 16 (+3)

Dex 12 (+1)

Wis 10 (+0)

Con 13 (+1)

Int 9 (-1)

Cha 7 (-2)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Common

Equipment club

Level 1 Minion Brute

XP 25 each

Initiative +1

Perception +0

3 Human Wasteland Raiders

Medium natural humanoid

HP 40; Bloodied 20

AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 13

Speed 6

Level 2 Soldier

XP 125 each

Initiative +5

Perception +2

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage.

⚔ Barbed Spear (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Requirement: The raider must not have a creature grabbed.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC. While the raider has a creature grabbed, it can use *barbed spear* against the grabbed creature only.

⚔ Gutting Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the raider); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Skills Intimidate +5

Str 18 (+5)

Dex 14 (+3)

Wis 12 (+2)

Con 16 (+4)

Int 8 (+0)

Cha 9 (+0)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Common

Equipment hide armor, barbed spear, dagger

STAGE ONE:

CROSS THE STONY BARRENS

The first days of travel are spent crossing the cracked, rough bedrock of the stony barrens. The uneven, treacherous ground makes it impossible to move with any speed if you've strayed from the road. The elves know the path well, though, and they push the characters to make good time despite the stifling heat.

Start the skill challenge's first stage with a group Athletics check (see below), and then read:

You're no soft-bellied king's son, but you're starting to feel like one as you trek through the stony barrens outside Tyr. For two days, the elves have practically loped across the baked landscape without even breathing hard. However, your scalded and dust-caked lungs feel like you've swallowed the sun, and you have days yet to go before you reach Altaruk.

Level: 1 (XP 100).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Athletics (group), Diplomacy, Endurance, Nature, Perception.

Athletics (DC 12, group check): Keeping up with Kaldras's family is no easy task for anyone unused to running with elves. All the adventurers must roll this check. If at least half succeed on this check, the group check counts as 1 success in this challenge.

Diplomacy (DC 12): Kaldras and his elves drive the adventurers hard. To keep tensions from flaring, the character steps in to calm the situation. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 1 success in this challenge.

Endurance (DC 19): Despite the quick pace and scorching heat, the character pushes onward without draining additional resources. Characters who succeeded in the group Athletics check gain a +2 bonus to this check. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge, but no character can contribute more than 1 Endurance check success.

Nature (DC 12): The adventurer uses his or her knowledge of the land to forage for additional supplies. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Perception (DC 12): Keeping an eye on the terrain ahead, the character circumvents spots of treacherous rubble and landslide areas. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Secondary Skills: Heal.

Heal (DC 19): When a character fails an Endurance check, a different adventurer can make a Heal check to neutralize that failure. A Heal check can be used in this manner only once during this stage of the challenge.

Success: The characters reach the sandy wastes without incident.

Failure: A landslide barrels down toward the caravan. Everyone manages to avoid its path, but the road ahead is blocked. Now, the caravan must spend an extra day traveling off the road to reach the sandy wastes.

STAGE TWO:

STORM IN THE SANDY WASTES

Depending on the adventurers' success in the first stage of the skill challenge, it takes two or three days to reach the western lip of the sandy wastes.

Start the skill challenge's second stage with a group Endurance check (see below), and then read:

After heading southeast for days, the rocky terrain collapses into dunes. The wind picks up, blowing yellow sand into your eyes and nostrils. You look for a way to shield your blistered face from the stinging granules. When the wind stills, you notice that the heat appears to shimmer in the bare, beige landscape. At night, the air turns frigid, and a chill creeps into your flesh to disturb your sleep.

Level: 1 (XP 100).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Endurance (group), Intimidate, Nature, Perception.

Endurance (DC 12 or 19, group): If the characters failed in the first part of the skill challenge, they must plow through massive dunes to reach the road. In this case, use the higher DC value for the group check. All the adventurers must roll this check. If at least half succeed on this check, the group check counts as 1 success in this challenge.

Intimidate (DC 12): The kanks are particularly unruly in the desert, but the adventurer pushes them on without mercy. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Nature (DC 12): The character uses his or her survival skills to construct a makeshift shelter to protect the group from the sun, wind, and night chill. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Perception (DC 12): Even though the terrain seems featureless, to the trained eye, the sandy wastes are navigable. The adventurer manages to circumvent large drifts in the road. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Secondary Skills: Heal.

Heal (DC 19): When a character fails an Endurance check, a different adventurer can make a Heal check to neutralize that failure. A Heal check can be used in this manner only once during this stage of the challenge.

Success: The characters reach the badlands near Altaruk without incident.

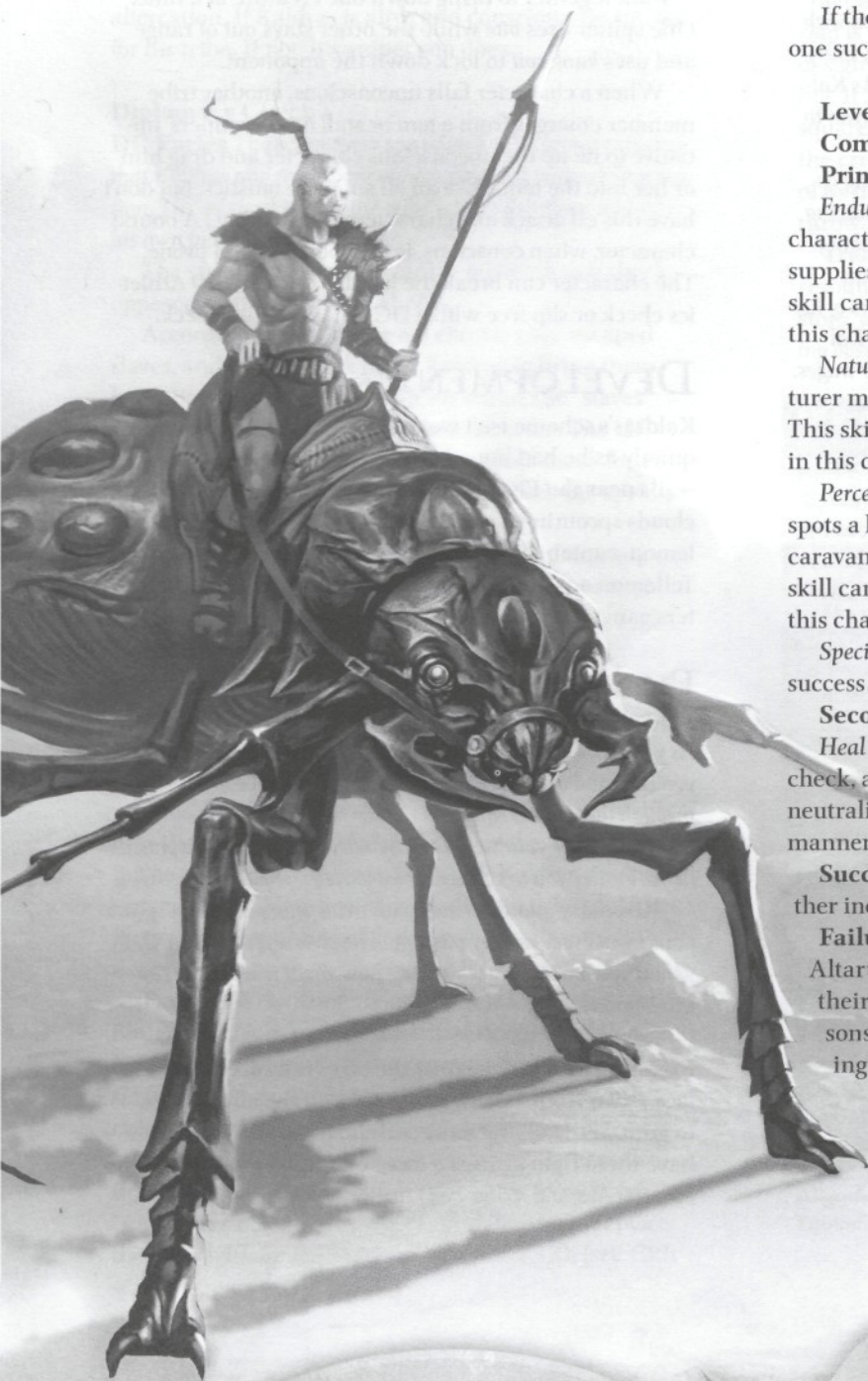
Failure: A sandstorm wallops the characters, and they lose their way for several days in the trackless dunes. Each adventurer loses 3 survival days from his or her personal stores. A character who doesn't have enough survival days loses 1 healing surge for each day's worth of rations he or she is short. The effect lasts until the character takes an extended rest in Altaruk (at this adventure's end).

STAGE THREE: RAIDERS IN THE BADLANDS

Eventually, the caravan reaches the rocky badlands. The twisting canyonlike passages are perfect for ambushes, and it isn't long before the caravan comes under attack.

Start the skill challenge's third stage with a combat against the raiders. Read:

You reach the twisting maze of badlands, the last leg of your journey. The road winds between rock faces, and your skin tingles. Someone, or many someones, could be lurking above you, in front of you, or beside you, and you might never know it. You walk for several hours, listening to the echoes of your party's steps bounce back to you in unpredictable patterns.



RAIDER ATTACK Encounter Level 1 (450 XP)

3 human wasteland raiders
10 human slaves

A band of desperate humans descends on the caravan, looking for supplies. Two wasteland raiders and the escaped slaves attack the adventurers. The other wasteland raider searches for a way to reach the kanks and their cargo. During the fight, Kaldras and his family hide near the kanks, letting the adventurers prove their worth.

This encounter does not have a map, but you can create a twisting path with lots of rocks and rubble that can serve as blocking and difficult terrain.

If the adventurers succeed in the battle, it counts as one success for the group in this challenge.

Level: 1 (XP 100).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Endurance, Nature, Perception, special.

Endurance (DC 12): Despite the heat and terrain, the character pushes on to Altaruk, rationing his or her supplies as necessary for the good of the group. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Nature (DC 12): The kanks are edgy, but the adventurer manages to calm them and keep them moving. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Perception (DC 12): Watching the bluffs, the character spots a large raiding party and manages to shuffle the caravan out of sight until the group moves away. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 2 successes in this challenge.

Special: The combat against the raiders counts as 1 success in this challenge.

Secondary Skills: Heal.

Heal (DC 19): When a character fails an Endurance check, a different adventurer can make a Heal check to neutralize that failure. A Heal check can be used in this manner only once during this stage of the challenge.

Success: The characters reach Altaruk without further incident.

Failure: The characters must overnight outside Altaruk, reaching the town the next morning. Late in their last night on the road, Kaldras sends one of his sons ahead to Altaruk to alert the tribe of his pending arrival with potential slaves.

ENCOUNTER B2: KALDRAS'S BETRAYAL

Encounter Level 1 (728 XP)

SETUP

Kaldras (elf peddler) (E)

6 elf snipers (S)

3 kank spitters (K)

When the characters reach Altaruk, read:

After a long trek from Tyr, you finally arrive at the gates leading into Altaruk. As Kaldras speaks to mercenary guards who palm his proffered ceramic coins, your eyes travel up the smooth walls that enclose the town. More guards, armed with obsidian-tipped spears, perch at intervals atop the wall. Every third guard faces the town rather than the landscape. As Kaldras wraps up his conversation, he motions for the caravan to follow him inside.

You meander through a ramshackle bazaar, watching as elf merchants haggle with an assortment of buyers. Realizing this must be the Elven Market in Altaruk, you start thinking about what you should do once Kaldras pays you. Within minutes, the caravan stops, and Kaldras greets members of his Moonrunner tribe. As elves begin unloading the cargo, Kaldras asks you to unhitch the kanks while he fetches your wages. He disappears into a nearby tent.

Kaldras instructs the tribe's fighters to quickly knock the hired hands unconscious, bind and gag them, and drag them into the tent. The tribe can smuggle them out of Altaruk in the predawn light. Clearly drifters, this lot won't be missed, and the price they'll fetch on the slave market can feed the tribe for a moon at least.

Insight Check (not allowed if the characters failed Stage 3 of the skill challenge from Encounter B1)
DC 15 You notice that the approaching elves are fingering their blades rather than eyeing the cargo.

If no one in the group succeeds on the Insight check, the adventurers are surprised on the first round of combat.

TACTICS

Kaldras emerges from the tent on his initiative, and orders the snipers to concentrate fire on one adventurer at a time. The snipers take aim at one of the ranged attackers (**Pak'cha**, **Suldin**, or **Vinara**). They dance around the market, only engaging in melee when able to flank an opponent. The snipers rely on Kaldras's peddler's command to maneuver into ideal positions.

Whenever possible, Kaldras uses *double dealing* to flank with a kank spitter. The elf trader trained the spitters (which are smaller than the caravan's kank soldiers) to work together to bring down one creature at a time. One spitter uses *bite* while the other stays out of range and uses *kank spit* to lock down the opponent.

When a character falls unconscious, another tribe member emerges from a tent or stall on the snipers' initiative to tie up the unconscious character and drag him or her into the tent. (Use an elf sniper's statistics, but don't have this elf attack any characters still fighting.) A bound character, when conscious, is immobilized and prone. The character can break the bonds with a DC 19 Athletics check or slip free with a DC 19 Acrobatics check.

DEVELOPMENT

Kaldras's scheme isn't working out as quickly or as quietly as he had hoped. Mercenaries posted on the walls near the Elven Market hear shouting and see dust clouds sprouting up. A runner dashes off to alert Tellemon, captain of Altaruk's merchant-quarter guard. Tellemon and two dozen enforcers arrive as the characters gain an edge over Kaldras.

PLEADING A CASE

Once Kaldras is bloodied, Tellemon arrives. Read:
As you strike at the treacherous elf, he yelps in pain. Before you can land another blow, a commanding voice reverberates through the market square.

"Hold! Stay your weapons! By the authority of Arisphistaneles, I order you to cease your violence!"

Mercenary guards armed with razor-sharp obsidian spears pour from every nearby passage. The elves' eyes flick warily in your direction as they wait to see how you'll react to the captain's order.

Pressing the attack against the elves is a sure way to face a two-front assault and condemn the adventurers to guilt. If the characters continue to attack, you can have them fight against a force of human guards (see the *Monster Manual*, page 162) until they've submitted.

If the adventurers stop attacking, read:

A battle-scarred human male in a polished carapace breastplate strides toward you. The sun reflects brilliantly off his bared steel short sword. Everyone's eyes are drawn to the precious metal.

"I am Tellemon, captain of the guard of this quarter. You have violated the peace, and I demand to know why."

Tellemon is one of Governor Arisphistaneles's chief enforcers. He has a fondness for bloodsport and thinks the best place to hash out disputes is in the arena. He refuses to shirk protocol, even though he thinks getting a truthful answer in the Elven Market is as likely as a cooling rain in Highsun.

Tellemon asks that a representative from each side of the conflict step forward and explain the reason for the altercation. If Kaldras is alive and conscious, he speaks for his tribe. If not, his sniper son does.

Diplomacy Check

DC Varies The adventurer speaking for the group explains that Kaldras and the Moonrunners attacked without provocation. The elf speaking for the tribe refutes this story and offers his own in response.

The speaking character makes a Diplomacy check, opposed by the elf's Bluff check.

According to the elf, the adventurers are escaped slaves, and their master hired Kaldras to bring them back. Brought to Altaruk with his cargo, the "slaves" escaped their bonds and attacked the tribe. The elf speaking receives a +1 bonus to his Bluff check for each elf killed in the fight. If Kaldras was killed, the speaker receives a +3 bonus to his Bluff check.

Resounding Success: If the Diplomacy check is 10 or more than the Bluff check, the adventurer cuts through the veil of suspicion Tellemon reserves for all Elven Market denizens. The captain banishes the tribe from Altaruk for one year and orders the elves to pay the adventurers 200 gp in ceramic coins and an item of value from Kaldras's personal stores. Unless the characters want to fight in the arena, go to Conclusion on page 16.

Success: If the Diplomacy check is equal to or higher than the Bluff check, Tellemon believes the adventurer. But he also sees an opportunity to give Kaldras a public comeuppance. He orders that the dispute to be settled in Bloodsand Arena, where he suspects the adventurers will thump the elves. Go to "Encounter B3: Coins in the Coffer."

Failure: If the Diplomacy check is lower than the Bluff check, Tellemon decides that despite the elves being consummate liars, he sees no reason to trust outsiders. The elves have brought good coin to Altaruk, even if their methods are a bit underhanded. The captain detains the adventurers and sentences them to a fight in Bloodsand Arena. Use the arena game from "Encounter B3: Coins in the Coffer"; however, replace the elves with an appropriate number of gith (see Gith statistics, pages 20-21).

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light outside. Dim light inside the tents.

Auction Platform: A 30-foot-by-20-foot platform used for slave auctions is raised about 5 feet off the ground. Sets of stairs are built into two of the platform's walled-in sides. Creatures on the ground can use the sides as cover against ranged attacks while launching their own attacks unhindered.

Carts and Tables: These squares are hindering terrain. It takes a DC 9 Athletics check to enter these squares. A creature whose check succeeds jumps atop the object.

Tents and Buildings: A number of merchant tents and other buildings dot the marketplace. All the buildings' doors are locked from the inside. A creature can enter a tent area through an opening or where the tent flap is visible on the map. Once inside, the creature's line of sight is limited to what is visible through the opening. If a creature moves or is forced to move into a tent square that lacks an opening, the tent collapses around the creature. The creature is immobilized until the end of its next turn and must make an immediate saving throw. If the creature fails its saving throw, it falls prone.

Treasure: If a character's Diplomacy check is a resounding success, Tellemon believes the adventurers' story, and they receive 200 gp in ceramic and a +1 flaming obsidian battleaxe from the elves' stores as recompense.

Elf Peddler (E)	Level 2 Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid	XP 125
HP 34; Bloodied 17	Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 15	Perception +8
Speed 7	
TRAITS	
Wild Step	
The peddler ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⬆ Bone Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.	
⬇ Double Dealing ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The peddler uses bone longsword and then shifts half its speed. If it ends the shift in a square where it flanks an enemy other than the creature it just attacked, uses bone longsword against the flanked enemy.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Peddler's Command ♦ At-Will (1/round)	
Effect: One ally within 20 squares of the peddler moves half its speed. If that ally is an elf, it instead shifts half its speed.	
FREE ACTIONS	
Elven Accuracy ♦ Encounter	
Effect: The peddler rerolls one of its attack rolls and uses the second result.	
Skills Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Stealth +9, Thievery +9	
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 16 (+4) Wis 14 (+3)
Con 10 (+1)	Int 12 (+2) Cha 16 (+4)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven	
Equipment bone longsword	

6 Elf Snipers (S)

Medium fey humanoid

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 17, Fortitude 13, Reflex 17, Will 16

Speed 7

Level 3 Minion Lurker

XP 38 each

Initiative +9

Perception +8

TRAITS**Sharpshooter's Advantage**

The sniper deals 3 extra damage against any creature it is hidden from.

Wild Step

The sniper ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.

STANDARD ACTIONSⓈ **Bone Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage.

Ⓢ **Chatkcha (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage.

MOVE ACTIONS**Elven Misdirection ♦ At-Will**

Effect: The sniper moves 2 squares. If it has cover or concealment, it can make a Stealth check to become hidden with an automatic check result of 25.

Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +10

Str 11 (+1)

Dex 18 (+5)

Wis 15 (+3)

Con 10 (+1)

Int 10 (+1)

Cha 11 (+1)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven

Equipment bone dagger, 10 chatkchas

3 Kank Spitters (K)

Small natural beast

HP 30; Bloodied 15

AC 14, Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14

Speed 8

Resist 5 acid, 5 poison

Level 2 Artillery

XP 125 each

Initiative +4

Perception +3

STANDARD ACTIONSⓈ **Bite (acid) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d4 + 1 damage plus 1d8 acid damage.

Ⓢ **Kank Spit (acid) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d4 + 1 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends both). If the target is already slowed, it is instead immobilized (save ends).

Str 13 (+2)

Dex 17 (+4)

Wis 14 (+3)

Con 12 (+2)

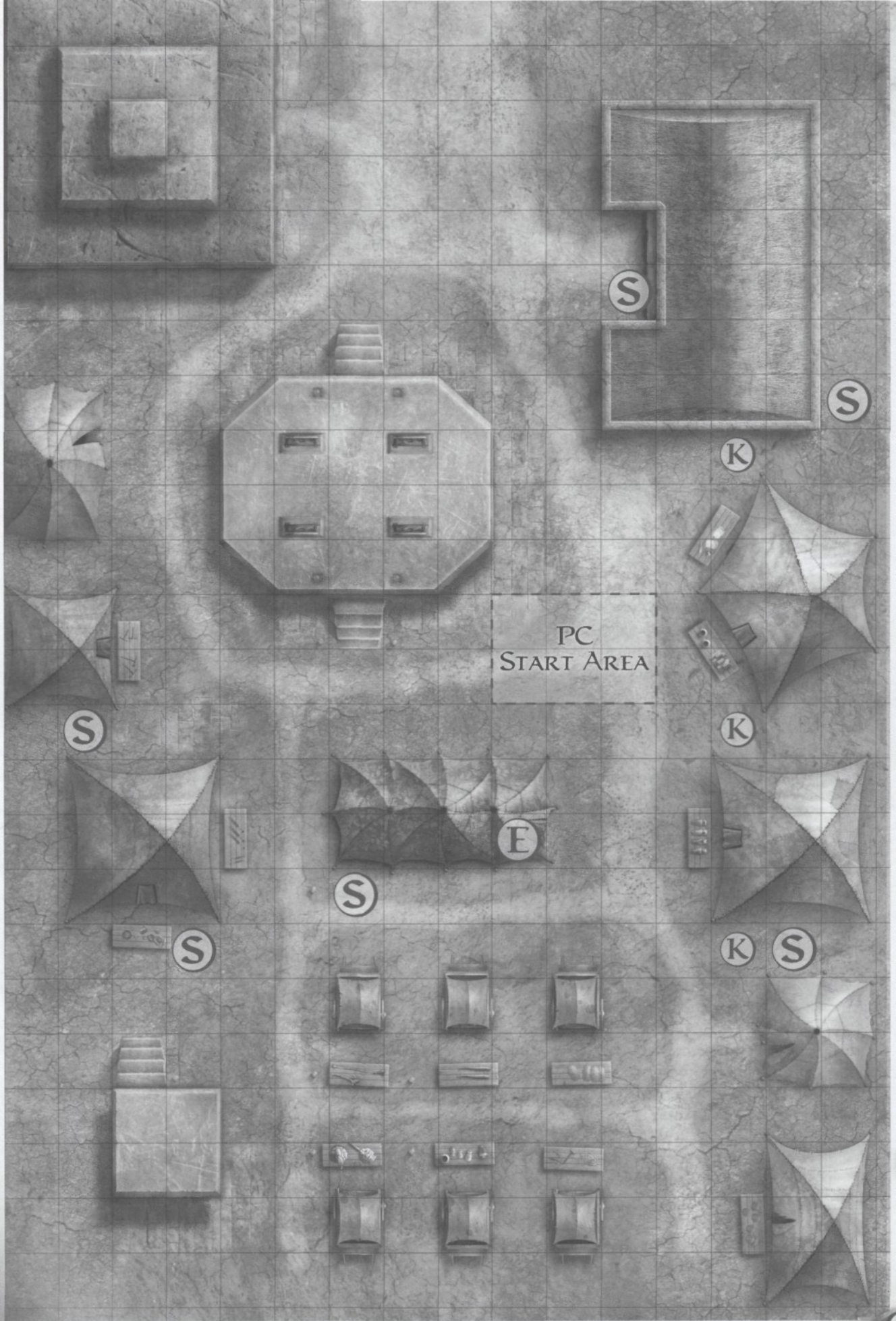
Int 2 (-3)

Cha 6 (-1)

Alignment unaligned

Languages —





ENCOUNTER B3: COINS IN THE COFFER

Encounter Level 2 (765 XP)

SETUP

Kaldras (elf peddler) (E)

5 elf snipers (S)

3 jhakar trapjaws (J)

(See the previous encounter for the elves' statistics.)

Governor Arisphistaneles approves Tellemon's ruling to pit the outsiders against the Moonrunners (or the gith, with a failed Diplomacy check) in Bloodsand Arena.

Read:

You are locked, weaponless, inside a seldom-used section of the arena barracks. You are given time for a short rest before being well fed and watered. As you are escorted to a modest-sized arena, you hear the crowd churning above you.

Once your eyes adjust to the brightness outside, you see Kaldras and his coterie across the bloodstained arena floor. A glance around the cracked arena shows you a multitude of stone pots filled with razor-sharp brambleweed, two large stone coffers on opposite ends of the arena, and a pile of seven giant ceramic coins. Your weapons and implements are piled on the floor at your feet.

A Balican noble, appointed today's master of games, stands up and sounds a gong.

Read the game's objective to the players. Have them pick a coffer. Be sure to tell them the coins require two hands to carry and that the coffers start out closed.

COINS IN THE COFFER

Objective: Take the coins from the center of the arena and place them in your team's stone coffer. The group that scores the most points after five rounds wins. Combatants can steal coins from each other's coffers.

Attacking the Other Team: You cannot make an attack that directly does harm to a member of the opposing team. If you do so, you are removed from the game. You can, however, cause indirect harm through forced movement or by other means.

Coins: It takes a minor action to pick up a coin and a free action to drop it in a coffer. The giant coins require both hands to carry.

Coffer: Both coffers start out closed. It takes a minor action to open a coffer. The lid can be closed again with another minor action, although it isn't necessary.

DEVELOPMENT

If the adventurers killed Kaldras in the market fight, another Moonrunner elf peddler takes his place, and the elves—resolving to win the game in Kaldras's memory—gain a +1 bonus to speed on their first turn.

If you have fewer than six players, reduce the number of elf snipers to account for the difference. (Kaldras plus the snipers should equal the group's number.)

TACTICS

The snipers capitalize on their *elfen misdirection* and Kaldras's *peddler's command* to dash about the arena with ease. They bull rush adventurers carrying coins in an effort to push them into brambleweed, but do not directly attack them unless first attacked.

After the first round, the gate opens. Three squat, slaving jhakars scurry out, chasing nearby combatants. They savage elves and adventurers alike. Once bloodied, they retreat to a corner to tend their wounds.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Arena Walls: The arena walls are 15 feet high.

Brambleweed: The circles on the map represent low, wide pots of brambleweed—a fat bush covered in razor-sharp offshoots. Brambleweed squares are difficult terrain. A creature that starts its turn in a brambleweed square takes 5 damage. A creature that ends its turn in a brambleweed square is restrained until the start of its next turn.

Crowd: Onlookers cheer wildly when a combatant forces an opponent into the brambleweed, granting the attacker a +1 bonus to speed and all defenses until the end of its next turn.

Gong: The master of games sounds a large gong at the start of each round.

CONCLUSION

After the combatants exit the arena, Tellemon congratulates the victors. If the characters win, a jovial Tellemon offers to share his winnings from the bet he placed on the game. The adventurers receive 100 gp in ceramic apiece plus what Kaldras owed them for their labor.

In addition, the wasteland outcasts are given supplies to take back to their camp outside Tyr if they told Tellemon of their plight.





DAVE ALLSOP

3 Jhakar Trapjaw (J)

Small natural beast (reptile)

Level 3 Soldier

XP 150 each

HP 47; Bloodied 23

Initiative +5

AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14

Perception +7

Speed 6

Low-light vision

TRAITS

Uncanny Senses

The trapjaw's attacks ignore concealment.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⬇ Bite ♦ At-Will

Primary Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage, and the trapjaw grabs the target. The target grants combat advantage until the grab ends. The trapjaw makes a secondary attack against the target.

Secondary Attack: Melee 1; +8 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target takes ongoing 5 damage until the grab ends.

⬇ Drag Down ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the trapjaw); +8 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d4 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone and cannot stand up until the grab ends.

Str 17 (+4)

Dex 14 (+3)

Wis 12 (+2)

Con 15 (+3)

Int 2 (-3)

Cha 6 (-1)

Alignment unaligned

Languages –

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of two mini-adventures. It can be played alone or as a follow-up to “Betrayal at Altaruk.” If you choose the latter, the events in “Veiled Threat” occur several weeks later. You might need to adjust a few story elements, depending on how the characters resolved the previous mini-adventure.

A prominent mercenary captain (Tellemon) is murdered in the arena stands as the adventurers wrap up their battle on the field. An aide to the governor hires the characters to investigate the slaying and capture the killer. Deeper investigation exposes Veiled Alliance and True organization plots and counterplots.

BACKGROUND

Arisphistaneles, governor of Altaruk, is the covert leader of the local Veiled Alliance cell. The organization of arcanists is dedicated to preservation magic and thwarting defilers. Even though Arisphistaneles cringes from memories of certain intrigues, he’s been able to justify most of his actions as serving a higher ideal.

The Veiled Alliance isn’t the only organization with covert operations in Altaruk. Members of the True cabal are devout followers of Sorcerer-King Kalak of Tyr, who was recently overthrown and slain. They hold out hope that Kalak survived the attack. Barring that, they plan to put an heir on his throne. Several True members, under deep cover, have won positions of influence in Altaruk. Dozens more have secured powerful posts throughout the Tyr Region.

In the aftermath of the Tyrian rebellion, most stories credited the rebels with killing the sorcerer-king, but a few rumors fingered the Veiled Alliance as well, saying it turned the wheels that set the plan in motion. Enraged, True followers seek revenge on the Veiled Alliance. Across the region, hidden agents are receiving word to strike at known or suspected Veiled Alliance members.

Tellemon, one of the mercenary captains hired to guard the prominent merchant houses’ concerns in Altaruk, is a True member. He’s suspected Arisphistaneles of being a Veiled Alliance sympathizer for months. Until a few days ago, Tellemon was content to quietly watch while enjoying gainful employment in the fortified town. However, his Tyrian contact’s latest letter revealed that Arisphistaneles isn’t just an Alliance agent; he heads the Altaruk cell. So Tellemon began hatching a plan to kill the governor.

But skullduggery roosts in the Alliance’s ranks, too. When Veiled Alliance agent Birk Suntouched uncovered the guard captain’s plan only hours before its slated execution, he decided to strike first and didn’t risk the time it would take to inform Arisphistaneles. Knowing Tellemon would be at Bloodsand Arena for the day’s games, Birk hired an assassin to kill the captain while the games held his attention.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

As the adventure begins, the characters are about to participate in an afternoon fight at Bloodsand Arena. As their battle ends, panic spreads through the stands. Guard Captain Tellemon, a frequent patron of the games, has been murdered while watching the adventurers compete. Selonius, one of the governor’s scribes, approaches the characters on Governor Arisphistaneles’s behalf. He hires them to find the murderer and bring him or her to justice.

The characters begin their investigation in the arena stands. The information they gather leads them to the barracks quarter of town. With further digging, the adventurers set out for the gladiator training halls, where they find the killer and possibly discover the rivalry between the True and the Veiled Alliance.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

For this adventure, the characters know each other but still prefer the company of their original groups. If your players didn’t go through the first mini-adventure, you can assume the characters made each other’s acquaintance in the arena. If you’re using your own characters, you can make up new hooks or modify the ones below.

HOOK: TYRIAN OUTLAWS

Read the following to players of **Kindrok**, **Suldin**, and **Vinara**:

Your time in Altaruk, a fortified town on a critical trade juncture between the city-states of Tyr and Balic, has served you well. After fleeing the chaos in Tyr following Sorcerer-King Kalak’s demise, you’ve managed to stay gainfully employed as you wait out the worst of Highsun’s blistering heat.

Unlike the city-states’ oppressive rules, Altaruk’s laws are reasonable and afford you a measure of stability, especially with mercenary guards around to back up the decrees. Arisphistaneles, Altaruk’s governor, even encourages residents to learn to read and write, something no despot ruling one of the Seven Cities would ever promote.

As you go about your business, you hear rumors about the Veiled Alliance, a secret order of preservers and opponents of the sorcerer-kings. If the stories are true, the organization is mostly responsible for the town's current fortunes. The Alliance seems like it would be a good ally; it'd probably help hide you from the bounty hunters you gave the slip to in Tyr. After several nights out buying drinks for talkers, you learn that Alliance members meet in a secret location near Bloodsand Arena. You decide to search for it. To mask your true intentions, you enter a gladiatorial contest alongside another group of vagabonds.

Quest XP: 500 XP (major quest) if the adventurers make peaceful contact with the Veiled Alliance cell in Altaruk.

Checks reveal:

Arcana Check

DC 12 When the Alliance scopes out a prospective member, an agent approaches the arcanists and asks a few carefully worded questions. His or her answers can lead to a trial period wherein the order covertly observes the candidate. If deemed worthy, the arcanist is offered initiation testing.

DC 19 Initiation is broken into two parts. The Green Test requires an arcanist to prove his or her use of magic does not defile the land. If the arcanist passes, a Test of Action—an Alliance-set mission—completes the initiation. Then the organization inducts the arcanist.

Streetwise Check

DC 19 According to rumor, many of Altaruk's leading society members belong to the Alliance. Even Governor Arisphistaneles might be an agent. He's sent more than one defiler to arena death battles, and he has spared known preservers.

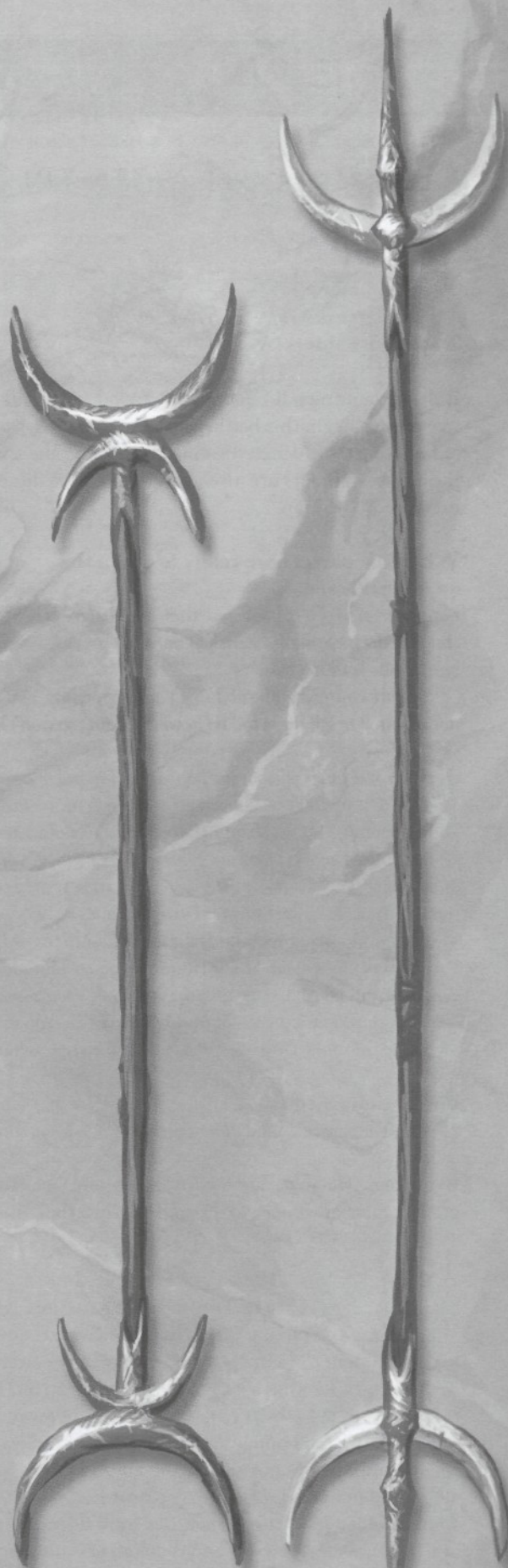
HOOK: WASTELAND OUTCASTS

Read the following to players of **Morg**, **Pak'cha**, and **Ulieth**:

Your time in Altaruk has not been pleasant. You thought the town would offer respite from the hard life you lived in the outcast camp near the Ringing Mountains, but your rotten luck has struck again. You incurred a debt to a Balican noble for some perceived insult against his niece. You're still not clear about what you supposedly did wrong. You suspect you're being used as a scapegoat for the niece's misbehavior—not that there's anything you can do about it.

The noble is in league with the powerful Wavir merchant house. You've been ordered to pay restitution and must compete in several arena battles to earn the ceramic. Pay from today's arena fight will cover the last of your debt, and you'll be free to leave this profit-mongering town.

Quest XP: 100 XP (minor quest) if the adventurers finish their arena combat and settle the debt.



ENCOUNTER VI: MATINEE OF WEBS

Encounter Level 2 (776 XP)

SETUP

- 2 gith hobblers (H)
- 4 gith piercers (G)
- 2 ambush spiders (A)

If the adventurers did not play "Betrayal at Altaruk," the two groups begin this battle as acquaintances assigned to fight together. When the characters enter the arena, the ambush spiders are already hidden in the dunes marked on the map.

When the players are ready to begin the adventure, read:

Late afternoon offers no respite from the blistering heat that clings to the air, and the stench of the day's previous arena battles fills your nostrils.

You are charged with subduing your opponents. You are not required to kill them today; however, doing so won't lose you any points. As usual, you don't know what types of savage creatures will emerge from the gate at the far end of the arena.

The fighting field is elaborately decorated. More than a half dozen large pillars sheathed in serrated obsidian dot the field's dunes. Each 20-foot-tall column is topped with a flat, dull surface. Massive spiderwebs stretch vertically between some of the pillars, partially obscuring your view.

The master of games sounds the gong, and the crowd cheers as the gate cranks open. Several hunched, gaunt humanoids clad in mismatched armor and carrying bone spears and obsidian-tipped javelins stride from the darkness. You instantly recognize your foes: Gith, psionically gifted, merciless hunters.

Perception Check

DC 19 You notice a sand dune shifting of its own accord.

Characters who make successful Perception checks do not grant combat advantage to the spiders when they attack.

TACTICS

The gith hobblers use *telekinetic leap* to gain the high ground atop the pillars. Then they rain javelins down on their opponents. Meanwhile, the gith piercers circle the field in pairs, looking for weak foes to gang up on. The piercers launch *telekinetic pierce* attacks right away. Then they rush in, stab opponents, and quickly shift away.

Roll initiative as normal for the ambush spiders. Each stays hidden in its dune until a creature moves within 5 squares of it. On its turn, it scuttles from its hiding spot and uses *venomous bite*. When reduced to 7 hit points or fewer, a spider withdraws from the battle.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Arena Walls: The arena walls are 15 feet high.

Pillars: These circular pillars are sheathed in serrated obsidian. A creature forced into a pillar does not move into the square; instead, it takes 1d8 damage. The 20-foot-tall pillars are blocking terrain. The top of each is flat and smooth.

Spiderwebs: Webbed squares are difficult terrain and lightly obscured. A creature that enters a webbed square must make an Acrobatics or Athletics check, or it is immobilized (Escape DC 13).

Crowd: Tired from a long day at the arena, the crowd gets fired up for spectacular displays of violence only. Whenever a creature scores a critical hit, onlookers shout their glee, bolstering the attacker and granting it 5 temporary hit points.

Treasure: After completing the battle, the wasteland outcasts settle their debt, and each Tyrian outlaw is paid his or her choice of 50 gp in ceramic or a fruit of healing (which has the same properties as a *potion of healing*; see *Player's Handbook*, page 255).

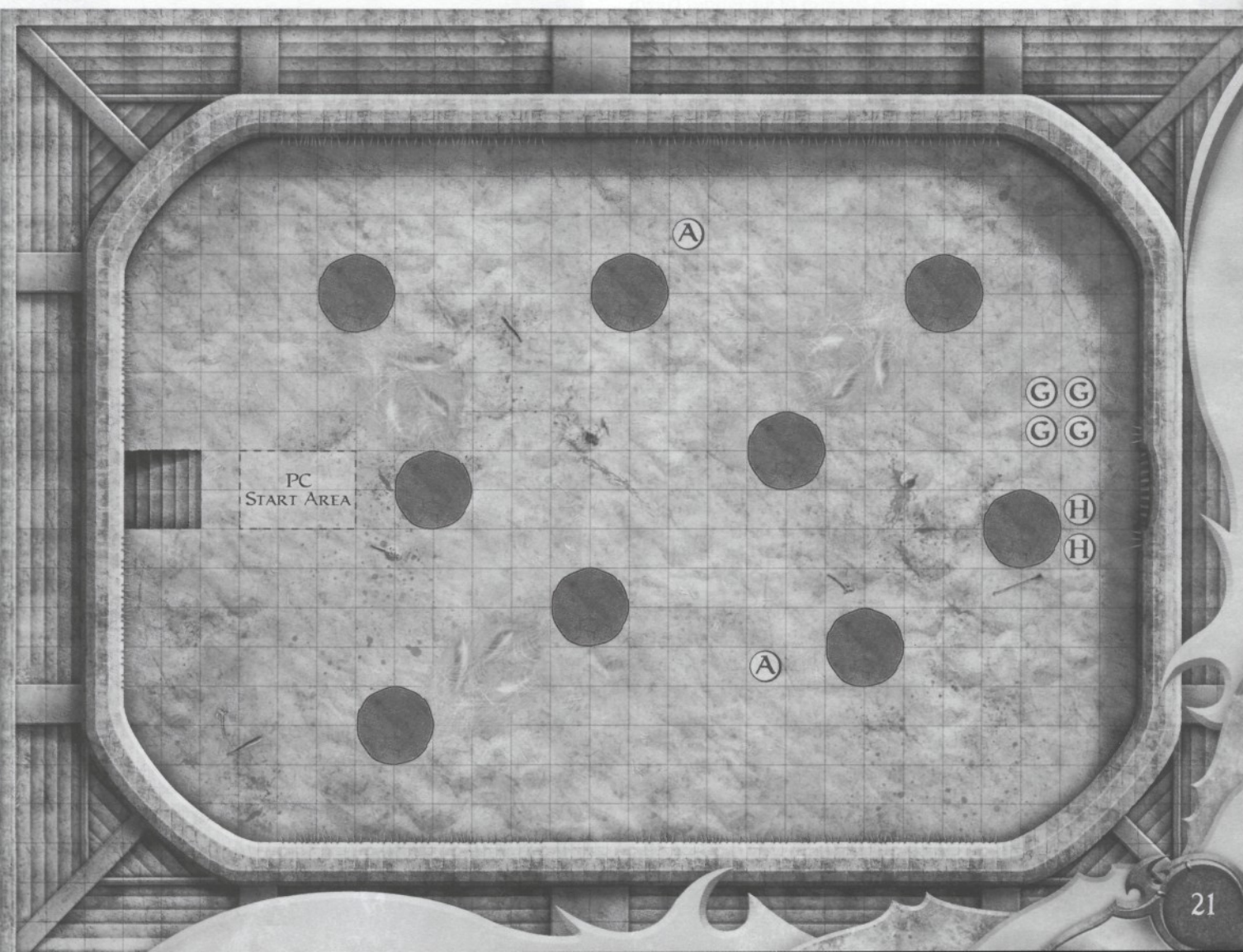
DEVELOPMENT

The crowd's shrieks of pleasure devolve into fright as Tellemon's body falls and his blood drips on the spectators in the stands below.

4 Gith Piercers (G)	Level 4 Minion Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +4
AC 17, Fortitude 18, Reflex 15, Will 14	Perception +2
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Spear (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage, and the gith shifts 1 square.	
✂ Telekinetic Pierce ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 6 damage, and the gith pushes the target 1 square.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Telekinetic Leap ♦ Encounter	
Effect: The gith flies 5 squares.	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 10 (+2)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 8 (+1)
Alignment evil	Wis 10 (+2)
Equipment inix-shell armor, obsidian-tipped spear	Cha 9 (+1)
	Languages Deep Speech

2 Ambush Spiders (A)	Level 2 Lurker
Medium natural beast (spider)	XP 125 each
HP 28; Bloodied 14	Initiative +8
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 13	Perception +8
Speed 8, climb 8 (spider climb)	Tremorsense 5
TRAITS	
Camouflage	
The spider can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has cover or concealment instead of needing superior cover or total concealment.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⬇ Bite ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.	
⬇ Venomous Bite (poison) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature the spider is hidden from); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).	
<i>First Failed Saving Throw:</i> The target is immobilized instead of slowed and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both).	
<i>Special:</i> When charging, the spider can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.	
Skills Acrobatics +9, Stealth +9	
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4) Wis 14 (+3)
Con 10 (+1)	Int 4 (-2) Cha 7 (-1)
Alignment unaligned	Languages –

2 Gith Hobblers (H)	Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175 each
HP 46; Bloodied 23	Initiative +3
AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14	Perception +3
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
⚙ Brain Fog ♦ Aura 1	
Enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⬇ Bone Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and the gith shifts 1 square.	
⬇ Javelin (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.	
⬇ Pinning Javelin (weapon) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Telekinetic Leap ♦ Encounter	
Effect: The gith flies 5 squares.	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 13 (+3) Wis 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 8 (+1) Cha 9 (+1)
Alignment evil	Languages Deep Speech
Equipment inix-shell armor, bone dagger, 10 obsidian-tipped javelins	



ENCOUNTER V2: MURDER AT THE GAMES

Encounter Level 2 (750 XP)

or

Encounter Level 3 (875 XP)

SETUP

When the characters' fight in Bloodsand Arena ends, read:

As you stand victorious in the last match of the day, cheers erupt from the spectator-packed stadium. A sudden shift from raucous whooping to frightened shrieks catches your attention. And someone cries, "Murder! Guards, help!"

The guards clear the stands, whipping at slaves and intimidating free folk. The gladiator handlers swoop the adventurers into the tunnel entrance that leads between the staging area and the arena barracks. The characters are asked to stay put until the guards restore peace in the arena. An hour later, a robed half-elf appears with a scroll tucked under one arm.

Read:

"Gladiators, I am Selonius. My master, Governor Arisphistaneles, extends his thanks for your patience. He came to the games today specifically to watch you, intrigued by rumors of your unconventional approach.

"The governor grieves the murder of one of his top captains, and worries that an insider might be involved. He has authorized me to quietly hire you as outside agents to investigate the bold slaying."

Selonius hands you the sealed scroll.

The scroll is a writ authorizing the adventurers to question the citizenry and capture the criminal, who is to be brought to Arisphistaneles's estate for questioning. The adventurers are promised 50 gp in ceramic apiece for completing the task.

If the characters accept, Selonius tells them the guards have left the body as it fell and details what little he knows about the victim.

- ♦ The murdered mercenary captain is named Tellemon. He oversaw patrols in the merchant quarter.
- ♦ Tellemon was an efficient and effective leader. He had a fondness for sending disputes to the arena for resolution. Believing Tellemon's reputation for doing so encouraged peaceful behavior, especially in the shady Elven Market, Arisphistaneles afforded Tellemon this indulgence.
- ♦ Tellemon's family lives in Tyr. His father is a prominent dune trader affiliated with House Vordon, the primary iron trading merchant house in the region.

- ♦ The guards have detained a few witnesses who were sitting near Tellemon when he was murdered.

FIND TELLEMON'S MURDERER

This skill challenge is divided into three stages.

If the characters played "Betrayal at Altaruk," they should recognize Tellemon as the guard captain who broke up their fight with the double-crossing elf trader Kaldras (and likely sent them to the arena, too).

STAGE ONE: ARENA INVESTIGATION

Read:

You climb the steps that lead to Bloodsand Arena's stands, where Tellemon's crumpled frame bakes in the late afternoon sun.

Level: 1 (XP 300).

Complexity: 3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Investigating the Body: *Heal* (DC 12), *Nature* (DC 12), *Perception* (DC 12).

Characters can use any of these skills to discover the first three successes, but only a successful *Nature* check reveals the fourth.

First Success: The character sees a slender, deep stabbing wound that entered Tellemon's left kidney.

Second Success: The adventurer realizes this type of wound shouldn't have killed Tellemon so quickly.

Third Success: The character finds green, pasty residue in the stab wound.

Fourth Success (Nature only): The adventurer knows the paste is a virulent poison made from cacti native to the area, and making it requires arcane magic.

Interviewing the Witnesses: *Diplomacy* (DC 12), *Intimidate* (DC 12), *Streetwise* (DC 12).

Characters can use any of these skills when questioning bystanders.

First Success: The character learns that a towering male at least 6 ½ feet tall and wrapped in a white tunic approached Tellemon. The captain cried out, and there was a clattering sound moments before his body hit the ground.

Second Success: A bystander tells the adventurer that the murderer fled the scene wearing sandals common to gladiators.

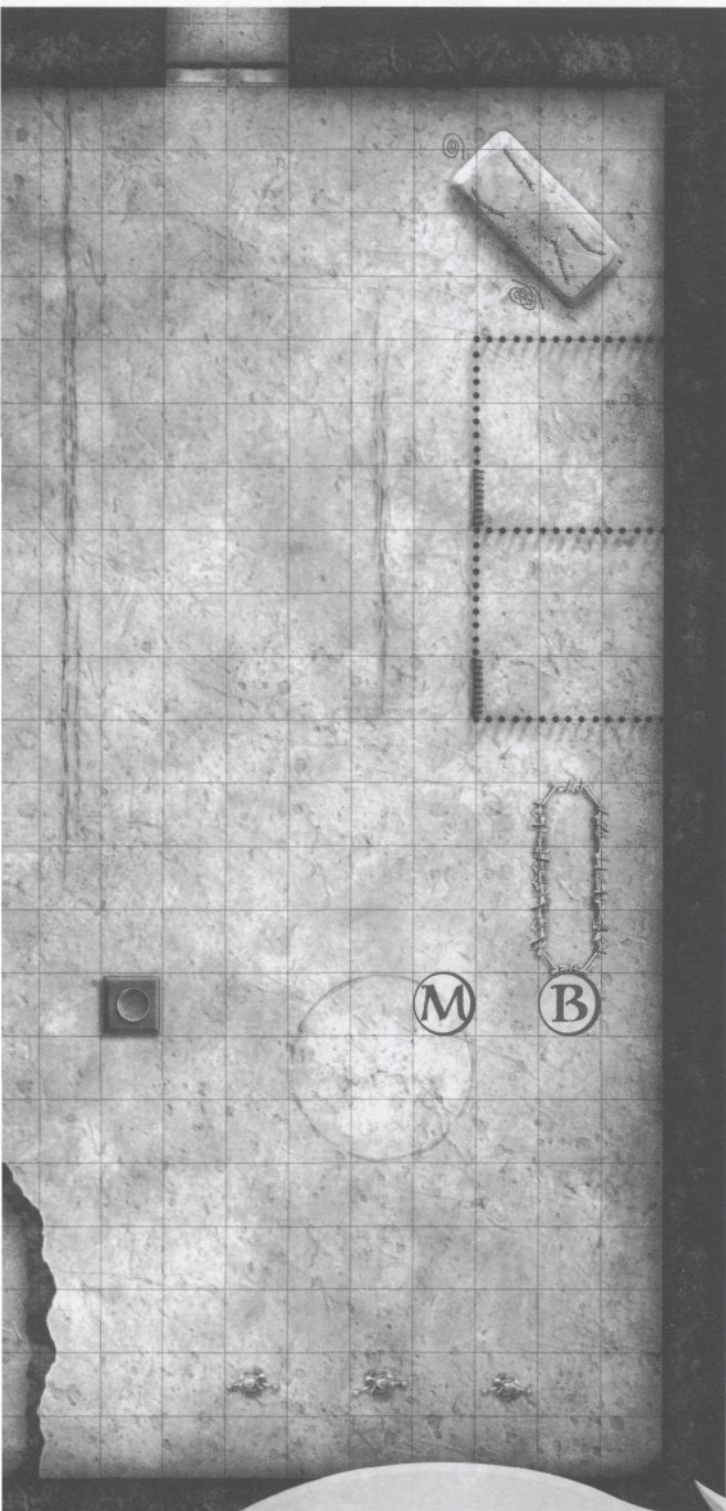
Finding the Weapon: *Arcana* (DC 19), *Perception* (DC 19).

First Success (Perception only): The character finds a bloody dagger under a seat near the body. Its hilt is wrapped in a fine tan cloth that is covered in strange glyphs.

Second Success (Arcana only): The adventurer realizes these quickly fading symbols mean an arcane charm was placed on the cloth and has been used.

Success: The characters discover the murderer fled toward the barracks quarter, and they learn the information without raising any suspicion.

Failure: A spectator reluctantly volunteers that the murderer fled toward the barracks quarter, but the characters' inquiries have caught the Veiled Alliance's attention.



STAGE TWO:

BOUND FOR THE BARRACKS

As the characters leave the stands, read:

Your inquiries have led you to the barracks quarter of town, where the mercenaries who guard Altaruk live. Off-duty guards drink, play games of chance, and participate in contests of athleticism as the day begins to cool into the evening.

Level: 1 (XP 100).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Intimidate, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise.

Diplomacy (DC 12): A character asks a couple guards if they've seen anything unusual today. One of the guards says a dwarf beggar asked several questions about Tellemon and his cohort this morning. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 1 success in this challenge.

Intimidate (DC 12): An adventurer frightens information from one of Tellemon's guards, who was also a close friend. He discloses that the captain received missives from Tyr every few weeks and was unwilling to divulge their contents. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 1 success in this challenge.

Perception (DC 12): A character sees a disheveled dwarf muttering to himself and heading toward the outskirts of the barracks quarter. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 1 success in this challenge.

Stealth (DC 12, after successful Perception check): A character follows the dwarf to a gladiator training hall near the barracks and watches him enter. This skill can be used to gain a maximum of 1 success in this challenge.

Streetwise (DC 19): Through bribery and eavesdropping, a character learns that a crazed dwarf beggar known as Birk Suntouched has been seen entering one of the gladiator training halls on the outskirts of the barracks. Two successes on this skill guide the group to the exact building.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Endurance, special.

Athletics (DC 12), Bluff (DC 12), Endurance (DC 12): A character participates in a game—perhaps drinking, gambling, or a physical contest—and earns the respect of the guards. The adventurer gains a +2 bonus to his or her next primary skill check.

Special: If the characters failed in the previous skill challenge, Birk's allies assault them during their investigation. Set up a combat encounter using the marketplace map with the adventurers fighting against a group of humans or dwarves worth 300 XP (human slaves work well; see page 9).

Success: The characters enter the gladiator training hall in time to overhear Birk Suntouched ask the gladiator why he dropped the knife and fled from the stadium.

Failure: The characters enter the gladiator training hall and find the gladiator assassin, but Birk Suntouched is nowhere to be found.

STAGE THREE: CONFRONTING A KILLER

Level 1 Encounter (350 or 475 XP)

1 mul gladiator

Birk Suntouched (dwarf conscript)

As the characters enter the training hall, read:

Empty slave pens line one end of the room, and a stone table obviously used for discipline and torture sits in a corner. A weapons rack, combat circle, training dummies, and a beast pit fill the rest of the hall.

Use the gladiator training hall map for this encounter. If the characters succeeded in the first two stages of the skill challenge, they arrive in time to see a haggard dwarf beggar (Birk) speaking in hushed tones to a tall, thick mul gladiator (Tellemon's murderer). Both are near the combat circle.

The adventurers can either fight the duo, in which case Birk picks up a gouge from the weapons rack, or engage them in conversation. If they do the former, the gladiator attempts to keep the adventurers busy while Birk (unaware that the group is working for the governor, a Veiled Alliance ally) engages in a fighting retreat. If the adventurers talk to Birk, go to Conclusion.

If the characters failed in the previous skill challenge stages, they find only the gladiator here, who fights until defeated.

CONCLUSION

If the characters question Birk, he comes clean. The dwarf tells the adventurers he hired the gladiator to kill Tellemon because the captain of the guard was spearheading a True plot to assassinate Arisphistaneles. If the characters show Birk the governor-signed writ or make a DC 19 Diplomacy check, Birk tells them that both he and the governor are Veiled Alliance members and asks to be taken to Arisphistaneles's estate to verify his story.

The governor, glad to find out about the True organization's plot, pays the adventurers and awards them with his personal sanction, which comes with free lodging and sustenance whenever they're in Altaruk. The gladiator is exonerated for killing Tellemon to protect the governor. Lastly, the governor offers the characters a chance to undergo the initiation tests to join the governor's cell of the Veiled Alliance (which would complete a major quest for the Tyrian outlaws). An initiation mission could also be the start of another adventure on Athas!

If the characters apprehend the gladiator only, Arisphistaneles pays them. They do not, however, gain his personal sanction, nor are they offered initiation into the governor's Veiled Alliance cell. The governor later hears the whole story from Birk.

Birk Suntouched (Dwarf Conscript)	Level 2 Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 125
HP 47; Bloodied 23	Initiative +2
AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 14	Perception +3
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects	
TRAITS	
Stand the Ground	
The conscript can move 1 square less than specified when subject to a pull, a push, or a slide.	
Steady-Footed	
The conscript can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Gouge (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage. If the conscript scores a critical hit, the conscript pushes the target 1 square and knocks it prone.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
Singular Focus ☒ Recharge when the chosen enemy drops to 0 hit points or fewer	
Effect: The conscript chooses one enemy it can see. Until the end of the encounter or until the conscript uses this power again, the conscript gains a +5 bonus to melee damage rolls against that enemy.	
Skills Dungeoneering +8, Endurance +9	
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 12 (+2)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 11 (+1)
	Wis 14 (+3)
	Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment unaligned	
Languages Common, Dwarven	
Equipment hide armor, gouge	

Mul Gladiator	Level 4 Elite Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350
HP 112; Bloodied 56	Initiative +6
AC 20, Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 14	Perception +2
Speed 6	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ Warhammer (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage.	
⊕ Double Sweep ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The gladiator uses warhammer twice. If both attacks hit the same target, the gladiator knocks the target prone.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⊕ Pursuing Shove ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the gladiator stands up.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +7 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The gladiator pushes the target 3 squares and shifts 3 squares to a square adjacent to the target.	
Incredible Toughness ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The gladiator starts its turn.	
Effect (No Action): The gladiator ends one effect that includes ongoing damage and the dazed, the slowed, the stunned, or the weakened condition.	
Str 19 (+6)	Dex 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 9 (+1)
	Wis 11 (+2)
	Cha 7 (+0)
Alignment unaligned	
Languages Common	
Equipment warhammer	



FACE THE SAVAGE LAND OF ATHAS

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